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ABSTRACT

The National Dissemination Project was originally funded by the U.S. Office of Economic Opportunity to develop and test a more aggressive model for educational dissemination--a model aimed at increasing the usefulness of information for the practictioner. In this final report, the NDP dissemination model is presented, predicated on the following objectives: (1) to build and facilitate the development of local client initiative, (2) to expand and strengthen the client organization in becoming a more viable and powerful force capable of dealing with problems affecting it, and (3) to educate the client in the utilization of basic planning skills. The report begins with a background to the NDP. Following this, a series of conclusions and recommendations for the dissemination and utilization of knowledge are presented. Existing community college conditions are briefly described, and Federal dissemination efforts aimed at improving the quality of American education are analyzed. Finally, the NDP "Tactical Dissemination" model is presented and analyzed. (Author)

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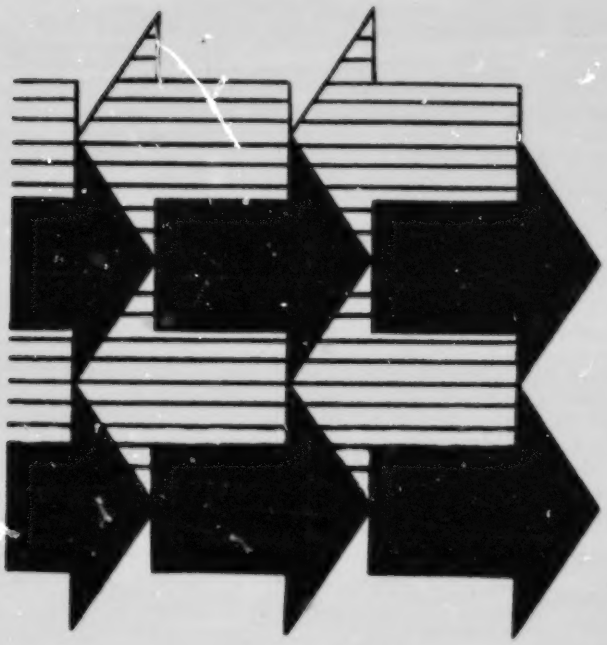
TACTICAL DISSEMINATION

THE NATIONAL DISSEMINATION PROJECT FOR POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION: REPORT ON KNOWLEDGE UTILIZATION



August 16, 1974

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Washington State Board for
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FOREWORD

This is one of two final reports for the operational stage of the OEO-funded National Dissemination Project. Specifically, it is less an account of activities and procedures than a review and planning document, presenting the argument for a new "Tactical" approach to Federal efforts at the retrieval and dissemination of information.

The report begins with a background to the National Dissemination Project (NDP), a project designed to retrieve broad, experiential knowledge from an array of OEO community college planning projects and to design and execute a strategy to communicate this knowledge to practitioners.

Following this, a series of conclusions and recommendations for the dissemination and utilization of knowledge are presented. Existing community college conditions are briefly described and Federal dissemination efforts aimed at improving the quality of American education are analysed.

What arises out of this is a "Tactical Dissemination Model" that (1) is based on an aggressive strategy for reaching practitioners and providing assistance geared to their needs, (2) is planning oriented, and (3) recognizes that dissemination can be carried out through a variety of "modes" -- including the use of prepared mailings, telephone calls,

work sessions, etc. -- according to the particular needs of the client.

PROJECT BACKGROUND:

The Original Demonstration Projects, Developments in Dissemination Theory, and NDP Activities

THE ORIGINAL OEO PLANNING PROJECTS

The National Dissemination Project began operations in July, 1972 as an effort by OEO to insure the use and application of research and demonstration projects in the community college field. A second, and perhaps equally important objective of the Project, was the study of the process by which knowledge is most effectively disseminated and utilized. It was hoped that the NDP might suggest a course of action in order to launch a realistic and badly needed Federal effort to better facilitate the utilization of information on demonstration projects.

The specific OEO demonstration projects whose combined experiences were to serve as a basis for a dissemination project were funded in 1970 by the Office of Program Development. Project grants were of two types: those which were aimed at development of a comprehensive state plan for the disadvantaged, and those which were aimed more directly at improving the instruction and overall educational capacity of state community colleges. Under the first stricture, it was hypothesized that if community colleges were to make a stronger impact on their communities then a strengthened planning capacity would be needed. The OEO projects would test whether state planning grants would help gear up com-

munity colleges for expected rapid development in the '70s. Under the second stricture, it was hypothesized that community colleges were unable to respond effectively to new needs because of lack of resources or their ineffective use.

By late 1970, most projects had been organized and were functioning within state community college agencies. Accomplishments, as was expected, varied greatly from project to project. While highly productive in many instances, the results were not altogether conclusive. Some critical component areas in community college development -- such as career education -- remained unexamined and untested. Consequently, there was a very real concern at OEO that unless a new project was funded to retrieve information on the demonstration projects, assess its worth, collect other relevant information, and disseminate this combined knowledge nationally, the approximately $1.5 million investment would not be fully utilized.

DEVELOPMENTS IN DISSEMINATION THEORY

Concurrent with OEO's interest in community college development, was an awareness that the agency lacked an effective means of disseminating information on its demonstration projects. Mr. Wesley Hjornevik, deputy director of the Office of Program Development had formed a special task force to study information utilization issues and make necessary recommendations to the agency.

Out of this study emerged a producer-consumer model of dissemination. This information-producer "markets" information to the consumer -- any group, organization, or agency which could make use of the information. If dissemination is viewed in this way, the "marketing function" requires an active effort by the disseminating agent to seek out potential clients and work with them to insure successful utilization.

The term "spectrum utilization" was coined to refer to a dissemination effort which spanned a wide spectrum of techniques -- from the "passive" collection and storage of information, to the very "active" and personal assistance in applying information to a local need. An August, 1971 report prepared for the OEO utilization Task Force by Jim Tanck concluded that:

> We must begin now to implement a utilization program. It is important that we quit talking about utilization and begin to test out a system . . . If the OPD utilization program demonstrates the value of such activity, it could be expanded agency-wide in FY '73. [1]

1. Tanck, Jim; "Utilization: An Approach for the Office of Program Development"; August 19, 1971; a working paper for the United Stetes Office of Economic Opportunity/OPD.

NATIONAL DISSEMINATION PROJECT ACTIVITIES

It was with this imperative that the NDP was funded in 1972, and has continued to function through three quite distinct phases: labeled Phases I, II, and II-B.

Phase I (July 1, 1972 - March 31, 1973): During this initial, exploratory period, visits were made to the OEO demonstration projects as well as other relevant information sources -- notably, Federal agencies, consortiums, and innovative institutions. Information was assessed, and national needs for "non-traditional" students were explored. Out of this assessment, seven project reports were prepared and printed which dealt with Academic Planning, Career Education, Support Services, and State Planning. Finally, a strategy for dissemination was formulated and presented to OEO in detailed form. This "strategy plan" described the various methods by which clients would be identified and explained the "modes" or techniques of dissemination which would be employed.

Phase II (April 1 - July 31, 1973): During this phase, beginning dissemination efforts were undertaken, with emphasis upon the more formal and "passive" modes of dissemination. Over 1,000 Project brochures were mailed to community colleges across the country and to related agencies, describing the Project and offering the printed reports upon request. More "active" assistance in helping local institutions plan for

change was also offered. As a result of this and several related attempts at reaching clients, 200 sets of reports were distributed and over ten institutions expressed an interest in further assistance. Possible "active" strategies were explored with these interested clients. Finally, two workshops were planned and sponsored by the Project to "test" the advantage of such a means of dissemination. They included a Florida workshop on "The Role of Community College in Corrections," and a Vermont workshop on "Self-Directed Learning in the Community College of Vermont".

Phase II-B (August 1, 1973 - August 31, 1974): Most "passive" dissemination plans had been fulfilled and some "active" efforts initiated by the summer of 1973, the original termination date for the Project. But because of the Project's successes in reaching receptive clients, and because a Project extention promised further investigation of more active dissemination techniques, OEO decided to refund the NDP for another year. During this extension phase a number of client-strategies were carried out which were relatively long-term and planning-oriented. For example, at Grossmont Community College and Los Angeles City College in California and at Dawson Community College in Montana, on-going communication by letter and telephone supplemented and strengthened several on-site "work sessions" held at each school. Substantive communication with these and other institutions and agencies often spanned a three-to-four month period.

This phase of the Project also saw development of more detailed dissemination reports. A national poll of client interests was used to identify report topics, which were then prepared at Washington State University under contract, and distributed nationally through the Project.

Generally, this was a phase in which all modes of dissemination were utilized. And the attempt was made to coordinate various dissemination techniques over an extended period in working with client institutions and agencies.

FIGURE I: OUTLINE OF THE NDP ACTIVITIES

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DISSEMINATION

An explicit charge of the National Dissemination Project has been to investigate the process by which dissemination and utilization of experience can be maximized. This project task was based on the conviction that there is far to little expertise in the theory of dissemination, and not enought emphasis on meaningful dissemination -- particularly in the social and education professions.

What has been learned by this Project over a two-year period -- covered in some detail in "The National Dissemination Project for Post-Secondary Education: A Final Report" (August 1, 1974) and in the body of this report -- has been distilled here into a set of conclusions and recommendations.

Taken as a whole, they project a dynamic role for Federal agencies in dissemination of relevant project experiences -- a role which at the present time is generally lacking.

Recommendations and conclusions are grouped under two broad sub-headings: Existing Conditions and Unmet Needs, and Toward a Tactical Dissemination Model.

EXISTING CONDITIONS AND UNMET NEEDS

-- Community college development is at a crucial stage. The growth climate of the late sixties, encouraged by Federal and state support, is beginning to slacken. In order to maintain high public support, colleges must be concerned with accountability, and must seek to better fulfill the needs of an enlarging "non-traditional" student population -- and all of this must be done on a non-expansive budget. Careful planning is an imperative.

-- The climate of innovation in community colleges is sporatic and uncoordinated. In most cases it represents an untapped potential. Of the 2,000 institutions, consortia, and agencies contacted nationwide by the NDP, as many as 250 requested reports on innovative developments, and approximately 25 were open enough to ask for direct planning assistance. To be open to change requires a good deal of institutional vulnerability and staff security.

-- Even when an institution is relatively open to change, development is often stifled by a lack of outside encouragement or advice in goal-setting and program pre-planning. Of the approximately 25 colleges provided personalized assistance by the NDP, often nothing more was needed to initiate program pre-planning than the catalysts of encouragement, support and advise in proceeding with planning steps.

-- Project experience suggests that non-technical assistance, provided at the program conceptualization stage, is the greatest institutional need. In most cases a college can

successfully mobilize a planning team, capable of developing or modifying programs in line with unique local needs -- once the commitment is made, and the planning steps formulated. It is at the crucial stage of commitment and pre-planning (which may extend over several months) that outside assistance reaps the biggest payoff. Technical programming assistance may be provided later by consultants, upon the instigation of the college. Providing such assistance is not the function of a dissemination project.

-- Existing Federal dissemination programs have minimal impact on education practitioners. Little effort is made to reinforce local initiative, to adapt or translate information to meet specific needs, or to employ various modes of dissemination. The clearinghouse approach, used by ERIC, is research-oriented. Data reports have little relevance to those practioners seeking to change existing programs or policies. No attempt is made to seek out potential users and provide them with personalized service.

Assistance provided by research and development agencies, such as the Regional Education Laboratories, may be personal but emphasizes technical assistance or the "marketing" of specific program models. It may consequently be constraining.

-- With reduced program development budgets, Federal agencies need to insure the maximum utilization of lessons learned in innovative projects. This will require an increased emphasis on dissemination, and upon an attempt to assist local institutions in utilizing information.

TOWARD A TACTICAL DISSEMINATION MODEL

-- A dynamic dissemination strategy must be founded upon general goals for the development of post-secondary education. Lacking in almost all existing dissemination programs is a clear and explicit commitment to educational goals and objectives. Goals are needed to focus and direct dissemination activities.

-- Once goals are formulated, an aggressive strategy for reaching clients and providing assistance geared to their needs can be initiated. This "dissemination strategy" is an explicit action plan which guides dissemination and can be periodically evaluated for effectiveness.

-- The "mode", or the process through which dissemination is carried out, is as important as the content of dissemination. A wide "spectrum" of dissemination modes are available for use, depending upon specific client needs and desires. These modes include use of: printed reports, letters dealing with specific client concerns, telephone conversations, workshops, and informal on-site work sessions. Ideally, the various modes can be mixed and coordinated in working with any given client.

-- Maximum utilization of information occurs when dissemination is personal and on-going, rather than impersonal and short-term; when it is supportive of local initiative rather than constraining. Dissemination is constraining when the effort is made to "sell" the client specific

program models for implementation. It is supportive when it encourages local formulation of program ideas.

-- The dissemination project "team" is most effective when made up of planning generalists. If the disseminator is overly specialized by subject area, he or she becomes less able to adapt to a broad range of client needs. The most effective role of the disseminator is in the generation of program or policy goals and the formulation of planning steps.

-- In cost/benefit terms, the advantages of a "Tactical" dissemination program -- which is client-centered, planning-oriented, and utilizes various dissemination techniques -- may be considerable.[1] This is true so long as the goal of dissemination is educational change. If the goal is simply the provision of information -- with no direct concern for utilization -- then the clearinghouse approach fills the need. What is required, then, is a Federal-level commitment to change-oriented dissemination.

1. For a cost/benefit analysis of dissemination activities see "The NDP for Post-Secondary Education: A Final Report," (August 1, 1974). Appendix E.

EXISTING CONDITIONS AND UNMET NEEDS

The public, and especially the 4-year colleges and universities, are shifting more and more responsibility onto the community colleges for undertaking the toughest tasks of higher education. Simultaneously, the problems we have already identified -- the poor match between the student's style of learning and the institution's style of teaching, the lockstep pressure to attend college directly after high school, the overemphasis on credentials -- are overtaking the community colleges and rendering them increasingly ill-equipped to perform the immense tasks they have been given. The 2-year institutions are not yet set in concrete, but the molds are being formed.

-- *The First Newman Commission Report (1972)*

The community college movement has been one of the most powerful forces in higher education over the past decade, but it is a movement which is still not certain of success. The prestigious Newman Commission, on its first Report on Higher Education[1.] (1972), predicted that in the absence of effective state or Federal leadership, there would be an inevitable erosion of community college experimentation and an extension of the "Junior College senario". This would result in a conversion of promising new institutions into lower-division appendages of universities or into conventional vocational schools. Likewise, the Carnegie Commission, in one of its recent reports [2.] has concluded that

1. Report on Higher Education; report of a special task force to the Secretary of HEW; Frank Newman, chairman; March, 1971.

2. Ben-David, Joseph; American Higher Education: Directions Old and New; sponsored by the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education; McGraw Hill; New York, 1972.

the major barrier to the development of community colleges has been the entrenchment of competing, more conventional types of two-year institutions.

Conclusions such as these should create a good deal of anxiety among those dedicated to the community college philosophy. Experiences in the National Dissemination Project tend to validate this concern.

Nevertheless, there is some climate for innovation. A sizable minority of agencies and institutions nationwide (approximately 13 percent or 250 out of 2,000) took the initiative to contact the NDP and request informative reports on innovative community college developments. Within existing two-year colleges and agencies there are individuals committed and willing to work hard to insure that their college or agency does not solidify or regress. But in the mid 1970's they face a special challenge, for Federal and state funds for innovative programs has been cut back, and much of the impetus for change lost.

It is in this educational milieu that national programs for dissemination -- based on encouragement and support of local change agents -- could prove to be a significant force. Specifically, development in the following broad areas needs to be supported:

1. Assessment of community needs (particularly for minority and disadvantaged populations). Who does the college serve and how? Are there excluded groups with particular unserved needs?

2. Comprehensive institutional and state planning. A humanistic planning system, participatory in nature and guided by action-oriented goals and objectives is

still a critical need. Planning to serve the community must be at the heart of the community college movement.

3. Academic programs relevant to the needs of non-traditional students. Compensatory education courses need concerted attention to remove the stigma of being for less bright students, of being traditionally text-book oriented, of being segregated from the college mainstream, and of being offered without credit. In all program areas there are a wealth of opportunities to explore, involving community-based learning for credit, programs integrating learning in the affective (feeling) and cognitive domains and programs designed to increase student self-direction.

4. Coordinated support service program planning. One consequence of poorly planned and executed support service programs is a high cost per pupil for community college programs when measured against successful program completions. For support service programs to be effective may require inter-departmental participation, student input, and an evaluation component. The end product is an integrated package of recruitment, financial aid, counseling, and other services designed to meet individual student needs.

5. Career education statewide planning. Only at the state level can overall policies and procedures be developed. A three-phase planning effort may be suggested, which includes: review and pre-planning to produce a career education plan, planning and demonstration to test advanced models and approaches, and utilization and implementation. The importance of such a detailed planning effort is not yet fully recognized by most policy-makers.

Several factors are likely to make two-year institutions more receptive to new, aggressive dissemination programs. Accountability is becoming an important political and pedagogical concept, requiring of colleges some form of planning and evaluation. At the same time, enrollment by minority and disadvantaged students has, and will continue to, increase relative to the general student population. Together, these two factors could serve as the basis for

institutional reform; or they could lead to no more than an increase in statistics, sterile planning, and expanded traditional programming. Federal dissemination programs should take advantage of the concern for accountability, and an increase in the enrollment of non-traditional students, to help direct change.

Overall, there appears to be a legitimate need for an aggressive dissemination effort, and institutions are at least potentially receptive.

DIFFUSION: THE NATURAL PROCESS OF CHANGE

All dissemination programs, no matter what their form, must have as an objective some kind of change within a social system. It is assumed, furthermore, that while change may occur through the natural process of diffusion, that this process is unsatisfactorily slow and uncontrollable -- hence the need to speed it up and provide some guidance through the dissemination of information.

Because there is a good deal of research on the process of diffusion, and much of it is relevant to the design of a dissemination program, a cursory review of diffusion theory is presented here before moving on to a discussion of existing Federal dissemination programs.

Diffusion is the process by which an innovation spreads from its source of origin to its ultimate users or adopters. Although diffusion studies have been conducted in a good number of fields, the research traditions in rural sociology and in education have produced the greatest number of studies and the most relevant findings. In rural sociology studies have typically dealt with the transmission of farm innovations from agricultural scientists or extension agents to farmers (such as Ryan and Gross' pioneering study of hybrid corn adoption in 1943). In education, researchers such as Paul Mort and Everett Rogers have analysed the pro-

cess by which structural and curricular changes become accepted within school systems.

What has emerged from these research traditions is a theory of diffusion which supports the following:[1]

> *(1) There are various clearly-definable stages in the adoption of innovation. These stages correspond to awareness of the innovation, interest, evaluation of the innovation as suitable or unsuitable for local adoption, trial, and final adoption.* To be effective, a dissemination program should be willing to provide assistance to the client at any or all of these stages.
>
> *(2) For an innovation to be accepted, it must demonstrate: relative advantage over existing practices, compatibility with the values and structures of the institution, non-complexity of implementation, divisibility (the ability to be modified to local conditions and needs), and communicability (the ability to be made readily understandable).* Obviously a dissemination program cannot hope to change anyone's attitudes or any institution's programs if it cannot meet these criteria of acceptance.
>
> *(3) Certain individuals, often referred to as change agents, are very influential in the adoption of innovation. Paul Lazarsfeld's study of the 1940 presidential election suggested that opionion followed a "two-step flow", from "opinion leaders" to those who accepted their opinions.*[2] *Later research in education uncovered what came to be known as "change agents" -- very similar to Lazarsfeld's "opinion leaders" -- who were functioning as professionals in the management level of institutions. They were the ones who sought out information and assistance and attempted to influence change. Often, they were located midway between the bureaucracy directors to whom they were responsible, and the client population which they hoped to serve. They were typically subject to the kinds of anxieties which move an individual toward working for change within a system.*

1. For a good summary of research findings, see: Rogers, Everett M.; Diffusion of Innovations; The Free Press, New York; 1962.

2. P. F. Lazarsfeld, B. Berelson, and H. Gaudet; The People's Choice: How the Voter Makes Up His Mind in a Presidential Campaign; Duell, Sloan and Pearce; New York; 1944.

The experience of the National Dissemination Project reinforces belief in the importance of change agents -- individuals working in responsible institutional positions respected by their colleagues, working hard for significant but orderly change. It is these individuals, particularly, which a dissemination program needs to reach and serve. Generally, they are looking for more than reports and references. They are most open to personalized advice and ongoing assistance.

THE STATE OF THE ART:
EDUCATIONAL DISSEMINATION

While there has been a good deal of relevant research on the diffusion of innovation -- suggesting the stages in an adoption process, the characteristics of an innovation which make it acceptable, and the types of individuals most receptive to change -- this knowledge has not yet been utilized in Federal-level dissemination programs.

In fact, there appears to be widespread distrust both among education parctitioners and congressmen of Federal efforts in dissemination. When Casper Weinberger became Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare in 1972, he expressed dismay at the amount of redundant and useless information which was available for practitioners, and at the lack of relevant and applicable dissemination. But while some of the waste has been cut out, there has been little positive movement to redirect dissemination along more relevant lines.

A look at two major Federal channels for dissemination -- ERIC and Regional Labs -- should provide a representative picture of the state of the art of knowledge utilization. Both ERIC and the Regional Education Laboratories were developed within the past decade by the US Office of

Education; and in somewhat modified form, both are currently being supported by the National Institute of Education.

The ERIC Clearinghouse System

ERIC is an acronym for the Educational Resources Information Center, a computerized data bank of educational information developed in the early and mid-1960's as the major dissemination arm of the USOE. Beginning in 1966, ERIC began functioning as a chain of 19 clearinghouses, each covering an area of educational concern and each housed at an institution (usually a university) that had strengths in the subject area involved. (see Figure II, p. 24). A central resource data bank in Washington, D.C., serves as a switching center for the network.

The duties of the clearinghouse are to collect, screen, organize, and disseminate reports on educational research and development; furnish copies of educational documents at nominal cost; and prepare interpretive summaries, research reviews, and bibliographies on critical topics.

Obviously, these activities are restricted to the quite "passive", non-personal forms of dissemination. ERIC is not an "aggressive" agency, reaching out to clients or trying to help them with their particular problems.

The most aggressive, client-oriented efforts by ERIC are termed "Selective Dissemination of Information" (SDI), and include the unsolicited distribution of newsletters and reports. For example, ERIC users are grouped according to

FIGURE II: A Listing of ERIC Clearinghouses

Adult Education, Syracuse University, New York

Counseling and Personnel Services, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor Michigan

Disadvantaged, Columbia University Teacher's College, New York, New York

Early Childhood Education, University of Illinois, Urbana, Illinois

Educational Administration, University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon

Educational Facilities, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin

Educational Media and Technology, Institute for Communication Research, Stanford University, Stanford, California

Exceptional Children, Council for Exceptional Children, National Association, Washington, D.C.

Higher Education, George Washington University, Washington, D.C.

Junior Colleges, University of California at Los Angeles, Los Angeles, California

Library and Information Sciences, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, Minnesota

Linguistics, Center for Applied Linguistics, Washington, D.C.

Reading, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana

Rural Education and Small Schools, New Mexico State University, Las Cruces, New Mexico

Science Education, Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio

Teacher Education, American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, Washington, D.C.

Teaching of English, National Council of Teachers of English, Champaign, Illinois

Teaching of Foreign Languages, Modern Language Association of America, New York, New York

Vocational and Technical Education, Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio

professional interest (academic deans, community services, special education teachers, etc.). The clearinghouses then assume on-going responsibility for identifying incoming materials that fall within the user's area of interest, and for notifying the user of their availability.

While such efforts may be praiseworthy, it is doubtful whether they serve to meet the quite specific needs of most practitioners. Nor do they provide the opportunity for dialogue in translating and utilizing information. Research on the benefits and audience of ERIC is a critical need. Several possible criticisms of the clearinghouse approach, which need more investigation,are suggested here.

(1) The clearinghouse approach has not proved successful in reaching educational practitioners. A recent study conducted by the Graduate Library School, Indiana University, Bloomington, gives an idea of who ERIC is reaching.[1] The study concludes that in 1970 alone almost ten million persons used ERIC materials. Yet, 62 percent of the users were undergraduate and graduate university students using ERIC as a reference tool for term papers and theses. Only 21 percent of the users were teachers, 11 percent were administrators and six percent were classified as "other users."

These findings are consistent with the long-standing understanding by dissemination researchers that clearinghouses are nearly useless in assisting those engaged in educational change.[2] By design, clearinghouses seem best able to serve a "footnoting function" for those seeking documentation and references. The close ties that the ERIC Clearinghouses maintain with their university sponsors, and the technical research bias of most information stored in ERIC,may account for this pattern of usage.

1. Research Report, Mildred McQueen (editor), Science Research Associates, March 1973.

2. For a discussion, see: Dissemination and Implementation: Educational Research. Proceedings of the Third Annual Phi Delta Kappa Symposium on Educational Research. (1962) Bloomington, Indiana.

(2) Most clearinghouse activities necessarily relate to library rather than dissemination functions. These include the acquisition and processing of information, the maintenance of retrieval tools, and the maintenance of an expanding resource data bank. Such activities relate closely to the field of library science. In fact, an Office of Education report on dissemination suggests " . . . basing the core of the center's . . . activities on proven systems and methods from the field of library and information science . . ." [1].

If a dissemination program is to be formulated which deals directly with problems of concern to the practitioner, it needs to be based on the communication sciences, making abundant use of diffusion and adoption research.

(3) The clearinghouse's reliance on technical research reports produces "in-breeding" in which researchers use clearinghouse material to support their own research proposals or in referencing research papers. Although this is a useful function, it does not serve the practitioner's need to understand new concepts, nor does it serve the need for assistance in formulating program ideas and laying out a planning process for change. In many cases, the clearinghouse fulfills a trivial function of documentation and referencing.

(4) The clearinghouse's method of operation -- with no provision for dialogue between the agency and the client -- encourages selective exposure and perception by the client. Because ERIC relies upon client requests for specific documents, ERIC users are apt to follow the principle of "selective exposure", selecting material to document and reinforce pre-existing notions. Furthermore, ERIC dissemination activities are normally "terminal", consisting of one act of dissemination. Continuing dialogue to provide assistance in selecting or interpretting materials is needed.

The experiences of the National Dissemination Project suggest that non-terminal and initially non-directive dialogue may be essential in moving clients to new levels of awareness and in preparing them to undertake specific planning activities. Without it, a static "selective perception" is encouraged, serving to reinforce what is already known or felt.

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1. C. Sherman, E. Lewis, and J. Wanger. The Education Information Center: An Introduction. Tinnon-Brown, Inc. Los Angeles, California (1969).

(5) Clearinghouse information is not made relevant to local needs, nor is it readily understandable. Consequently it cannot be utilized for institutional change. As already noted, clearinghouse information rarely meets the five criteria of acceptability: Relative advantage, compatability, non-complexity, divisibility (or ability to be modified), and communicability. The audience for whom materials are developed is poorly defined, and materials tend to be untranslatable for use by practitioners.

Furthermore, practitioners at all levels have been shown to have an almost universal distrust of research as a source of information.[1] In a significant study of the process of change in New York public schools, it was found that the only truly significant means of encouraging change was through personal dialogue, perhaps involving on-site visits if deemed necessary.[2] It is specifically this kind of assistance which a clearinghouse alone cannot provide.

1. For a discussion see, "The Function of the USOE and the State Departments of Education in the Dissemination and Implementation of Education Research," by David L. Clark in Dissemination and Implementation, proceedings of a Phi Beta Kappa Symposium on Educational Research; Bloomington, Indiana, 1962; pp. 105-118.

2. Ibid. An unpublished research report by Henry M. Brickell, cited by Clark.

There is a definite need for clearinghouses -- such as those which make up ERIC -- but it should be apparent that alone they are not reaching, nor properly serving, practitioners. Not only do the clearinghouses fail to reach most practitioners, who need information assistance, they are unable to provide a "spectrum" of relevant assistance to those they do reach. Consequently, most of those who use ERIC may not be oriented to change, but to reinforcement and documentation. To those change agents looking for personalized assistance in formulating ideas and in program planning, ERIC may well be of little or no value.

Regional Educational Laboratories

"The central mission of the program of the Regional Educational Laboratories is to speed the pace of intelligent application and widespread utilization of the results of educational research and development."

-- from Regaional Educational Laboratories: Progress Report. (July, 1968) USDHEW.

In 1964, President Johnson's special Task Force on Education made its findings and recommendations public. Foremost among these findings was that no single existing agency or institution was strategically located or empowered to relate effectively all segments of the educational community whose involvement was necessary to produce significant educational change. The Task Force recommended that something be done to rectify this situation.

With this mandate, the USOE dedicated itself to the development of a network of 20 Regional Laboratories that began operations in 1966 to serve a duel function:

-- To engage in research and development activities with direct institutional relevance, and

-- To "market" the results of research and development activity, and serve the general information needs of the region so as to increase educational quality on a national scale.

It is with this second dissemination component of the Regional Labs that we are interested. What could have, and in a few instances did, evolve out of the Laboratories' dissemination efforts was a personalized, client-oriented approach to helping identify and work with client needs. By and large, however, dissemination activities did not live up to expectations and were dominated by attempts to provide either clearinghouse services or to simply "market" and sell the educational wares of the laboratory.

In fairness to the Laboratories, their general dissemination activities were restricted and discouraged somewhat in the late 1960's. The Office of Education began to view the Laboratories as national resource centers for research and development, rather than institutions attempting to identify and serve regional needs.

With the recent shift to support by NIE, the Laboratories have had to make it on their own in a competitive system under NIE's "program purchase policy." Under this stricture, NIE issues requests for proposals for specific research and development activities, and Laboratories compete for funding. Those activities not covered specifically in the proposals, such as general dissemination and institutional assistance, must be cut out. Today, only eight of the original twenty Laboratories are still fully operational, and their dissemination activities are negligible.

What follows is a cursory review of the two dissemination strategies most frequently adopted by Regional Labora-

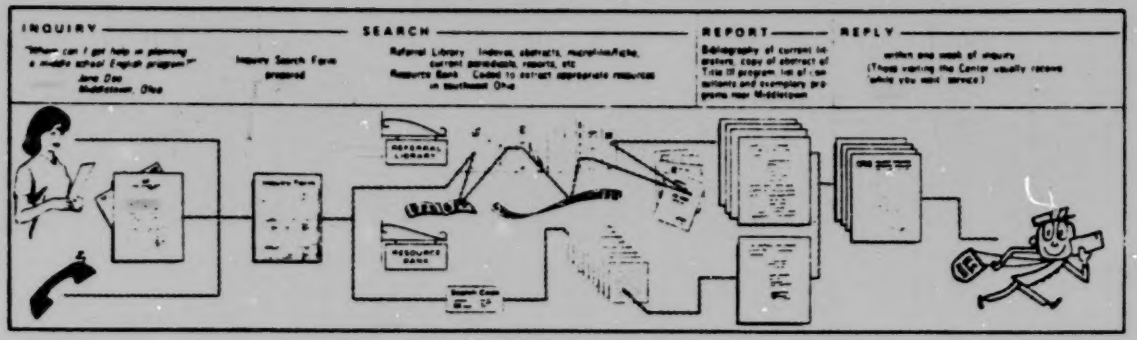
tories in the late 1960's: information clearinghouses and product marketing.

Information Clearinghouses: The functions and structural limitations of the clearinghouse approach to dissemination have already been described. In some cases the Regional Educational Laboratories interpreted their dissemination duties as requiring that they develop a complex system of storage and retrieval of information on regional educational programs. Because such programs were regional rather than national, and because they placed an emphasis on applicable program information rather than research findings, they may have been somewhat more useful for practitioners than ERIC. But information remained untranslated, often irrelevant, and sometimes trivial. Figure III portrays a reference system developed by one Regional Lab. Figure IV is a complex "search form" used in that system.

Product Marketing: Most Regional Labs fulfilled their dissemination duties by marketing the educational curricula, training programs, or organizational techniques they had developed. Working primarily through state education departments and universities, they organized displays, held conferences, and produced "glossy" product reports for distribution to school system personnel. Several criticisms can be made of this strict marketing approach to dissemination:

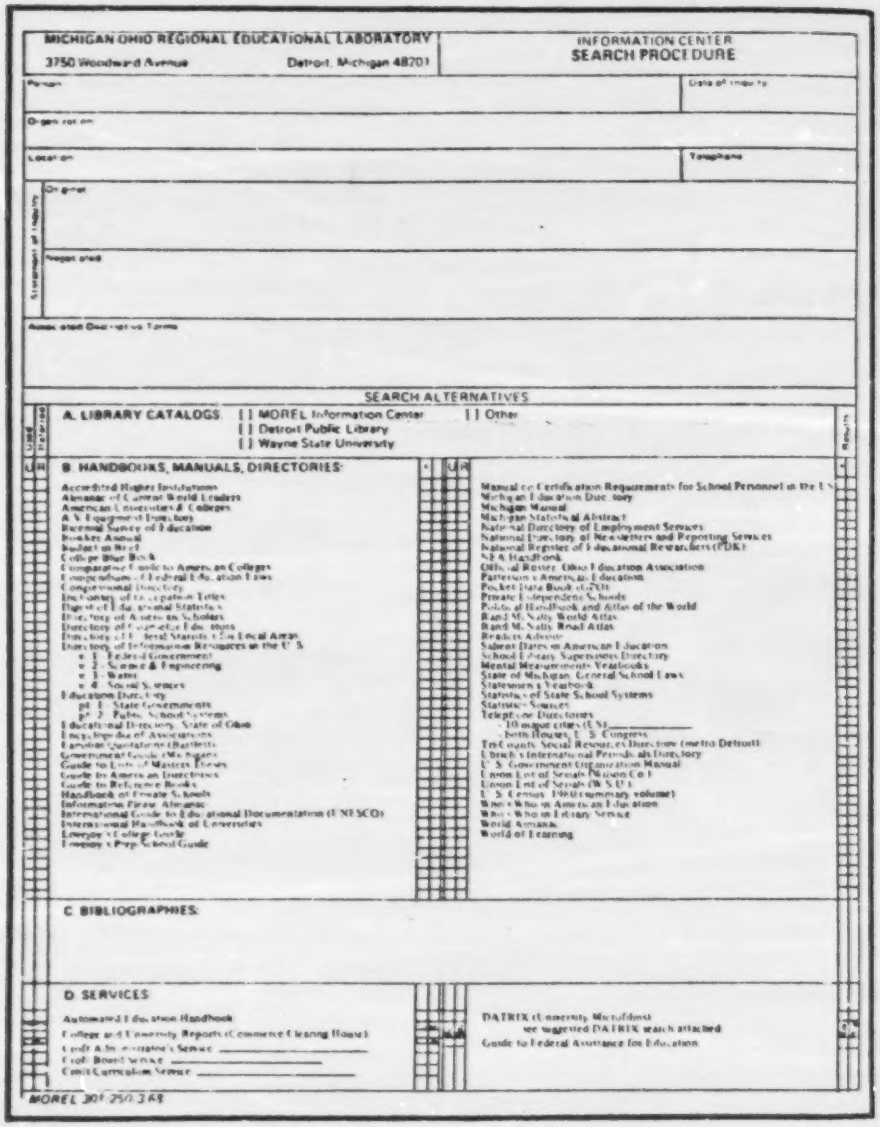
(1) It is oriented toward working with educational bureaucrats, who can be convinced that their system needs to buy a new prepackaged curriculum or

FIGURE III: An example of the clearinghouse approach to dissemination, as developed by the Michigan-Ohio Regional Education Laboratory (MOREL).



The MOREL Reference Sequence.

FIGURE IV: A "Search Form" employed by the Michigan-Ohio Regional Education Laboratory (MOREL) as part of its clearinghouse activities.



MICHIGAN OHIO REGIONAL EDUCATIONAL LABORATORY
3750 Woodward Avenue Detroit, Michigan 48201

INFORMATION CENTER
SEARCH PROCEDURE

Person | Date of Inquiry

Organization

Location | Telephone

Strategies of Inquiry: Original | Request cited

Associated Descriptive Terms

SEARCH ALTERNATIVES

A. LIBRARY CATALOGS [ ] MOREL Information Center [ ] Other
[ ] Detroit Public Library
[ ] Wayne State University

B. HANDBOOKS, MANUALS, DIRECTORIES:

Accredited Higher Institutions
Almanac of Current World Leaders
American Universities & Colleges
A V Equipment Directory
Biennial Survey of Education
Bowker Annual
Budget in Brief
College Blue Book
Comparative Guide to American Colleges
Compendium of Federal Education Laws
Congressional Directory
Dictionary of Occupational Titles
Digest of Educational Statistics
Directory of Access to Scholars
Directory of Cooperative Education
Directory of Federal Statistics for Local Areas
Directory of Information Resources in the U.S.
v. 1: Federal Government
v. 2: Science & Engineering
v. 3: Business
v. 4: Social Sciences
Education Directory
pt. 1: State Governments
pt. 2: Public School Systems
Educational Directory, State of Ohio
Encyclopedia of Associations
Equivalent Qualifications (Barbeau)
Government Guide (Ohio Region)
Guide to Lists of Masters Theses
Guide to American Directories
Guide to Reference Books
Handbook of Private Schools
Information Please Almanac
International Guide to Educational Documentation (UNESCO)
International Handbook of Universities
Lovejoy's College Guide
Lovejoy's Prep School Guide
Manual on Certification Requirements for School Personnel in the U.S.
Michigan Education Directory
Michigan Manual
Michigan Statistical Abstract
National Directory of Employment Services
National Directory of Newsletters and Reporting Services
National Register of Educational Researchers (PDK)
NEA Handbook
Official Roster, Ohio Education Association
Patterson's American Education
Pocket Data Book (GPO)
Private Independent Schools
Points of Handbook and Atlas of the World
Rand M. Nally World Atlas
Rand M. Nally Road Atlas
Readers Adviser
Submit Dates on American Education
School Library Supervisors Directory
Mental Measurements Yearbooks
State of Michigan General School Laws
Statesman's Yearbook
Statistics of State School Systems
Statistics Sources
Telephone Directories
- 10 major cities (U.S. _____)
- both Houses, U.S. Congress
Traf-O-Data Social Resources Directory (metro Detroit)
Ulrich's International Periodicals Directory
U.S. Government Organization Manual
Union List of Serials (No. U.S.)
Union List of Serials (U.S.)
U.S. Census 1980 (summary volume)
Who's Who in American Education
Who's Who in Library Service
World Almanac
World of Learning

C. BIBLIOGRAPHIES:

D. SERVICES

Automated Education Handbook
College and University Reports (Commerce Clearing House)
Conf: Arrangements Service _____
Conf: Board Service _____
Conf: Curriculum Service _____
DATRIX (University Microfilms)
see suggested DATRIX search attached
Guide to Federal Assistance for Education

MOREL 301 250 3 69

MOREL Search Procedure Form (Sheet 1).

teaching technique.

(2) It is inflexible, since the product is designed by the laboratory to be plugged into local systems.

(3) It may actually stifle local initiative as well as belief by local practitioners that they are capable of designing and implementing their own programs.

(4) It may result in minimal commitment and support by those using the "product" since it was not developed locally with their involvement.

(5) It assumes that the major need in education is for more efficient or more pedagogically sound programs. While this is an obvious need, a more important need may be local understanding and use of the planning process: in assessing needs, defining goals and objectives, formulating responses, implementing, and evaluating. Without this understanding, programs "sold" to local educational systems from the outside will be little more than high-priced show pieces.

The Referral Approach to Dissemination

While the major programs for educational dissemination reviewed in this report are to be found at the Federal level, comment should be made on another approach developed primarily at the non-Federal level. The referral approach to dissemination assumes that the process of institutional change can be opened up if practitioners can get in touch with each other and exchange information.

NEXUS, a new project sponsored by the American Association of Higher Education and supported by the Fund for the Improvement of Post-Secondary Education, provides a good example of referral dissemination. The emphasis in NEXUS is on the matching of relevant persons, programs, and information sources. A practitioner seeking help in developing or restructuring a program can call or write to NEXUS for a list of people who have experience in the same or related areas. Hopefully, out of this dialogue between educators, meaningful progress will be made.

Other agencies have also made use of referral systems. ORGANIZATION:RESPONSE, sponsored by the Archives of Institutional Change, has developed a national registry of individuals with interest in off-campus learning opportunities, and seeks to bring interested parties together. Other special interest

groups have operated or are operating similar matching referral systems.

Although such efforts can potentially provide communication bridges between members of special interest groups and facilitate personal communication, there are several possible dissemination shortcomings which need to be examined:

(1) Referrals may often be "hit-and-miss". Unless the client is referred to individuals whose capacities to assist are clearly known, the client may find most referrals useless.

(2) Many practitioners don't have the time or resources to provide planning support to those individuals referred to them. In most cases educators are too heavily involved in their own responsibilities to provide much more than moral support or printed material to those seeking help.

(3) Practitioners often are unable to adapt their local expertise to new situations, particularly when no provision is made for on-site visits. NDP experience suggests that local conditions, problems and planned responses vary greatly from site to site. In order to assist in local planning or policy-making, outsiders need a general planning background and a wide overview of subject areas -- rather than the specialized expertise often provided through referrals.

(4) The referral system does not provide continuing guidance and follow-up to insure that needs are being met. Once referrals are made, the client is on his own to retrieve, assess, and utilize information.

The referral approach to dissemination appears to offer some advantages over the clearinghouse and marketing approaches, particularly for those educators seeking personal advice relating to their own clearly-defined needs. Whether referral systems can follow through with meaningful and useful referrals on a consistent basis is doubtful.

It may be argued that if an educator wants referrals and is willing to make good use of them, he can easily contact the authors of program and research reports available through the ERIC clearinghouses. On the other hand, the referral system may be able to limit the number and provide more relevant referrals than clearinghouses.

The relative advantage of a referral system over clearinghouses appears by most standards to be minimal. Its most useful function may be in facilitating in-group communication, with no direct relationship to planning support or institutional change.

CONCLUSIONS

Dissemination programs at the Federal and non-Federal levels vacillate between:

--A perhaps naive belief that complex research or programmatic data can be utilized without assistance in extraction or planning. (The Clearinghouse approach).

--A distrust of the institution's ability to successfully plan, develop, or implement its own programs. (Hence the need to market educational products through Regional Laboratories).

-- A belief that if practitioners with common interests are provided the channel for communication, then they will use it to facilitate innovative program development or policy-making. (The referral approach).

All these approaches have major limitations in promoting locally-initiated change. National Dissemination Project experiences support the belief that research reports, program models, and simple referrals, are needed less than knowledge on how to conceptualize, organize, and plan for change. Planning assistance is designed to encourage local initiative rather than stifle it; to build on local strengths and commitments, rather than foster feelings of dependence.

With regard to the "modes" or techniques of relaying information, Federal dissemination programs have relied heavily upon impersonal channels. This is particularly true of the ERIC system, in which there is no provision for on-going communication or on-site visits. Information is "passively" disseminated in printed form.

A dissemination program more oriented toward the adoption of innovation will probably need to coordinate various dissemination modes -- report distribution, letter and telephone communication, and possible on-site visits -- into a coordinated strategy designed to meet client needs. Such an approach is explored in the following section.

What is critically needed now is a major reappraisal of the Federal thrust in dissemination. NIE, for example, as a newly functioning agency, has a special opportunity to design more relevant dissemination programs. A recent NIE report, in fact, suggests that the agency will ". . .conduct a cost analysis of ERIC, and study ways to promote feedback to ERIC designers and managers to make the system more relevant to its users." [1.]

Hopefully, analyses such as this will lead to a better understanding of the functions of dissemination, the audiences served and unserved by existing programs, and the kinds of informational assistance which need to be provided.

1. "The National Institute of Education: A Brief Outline of Its History, Status, and Tentative Plans"; U.S.DHEW; February 23, 1973; p. 19.

TOWARD A
TACTICAL DISSEMINATION MODEL

In this section, a new "Tactical" model for dissemination is presented, based upon National Dissemination Project experiences. It is not a model meant to replace existing dissemination programs, such as ERIC, but to supplement them. And it need not be overly expensive in operation: the NDP carried out all of its activities over a 26-month period on a budget of $186,000.

What is important is that provision be made for a dissemination effort -- either as a unit in a larger program or as an independent unit -- that is concerned with helping local educational institutions formulate and carry out their own program change based on local needs and situations.

Below is a description of a proposed Tactical Dissemination Model.

TACTICAL DISSEMINATION

The role of Tactical Dissemination is to build and facilitate the development of local client initiative to expand and strengthen the client organization in becoming a more viable and powerful force capable of dealing with problems affecting it, and to educate the client in the utilization of basic planning skills.

The major parameters of a Tactical Dissemination Model include:

-- Client-Centered Assistance. Inquiries and requests for assistance from educational practitioners need to be considered individually, and client-specific assistance needs to be provided. This implies that if a practitioner seeks additional information and help beyond the receipt of a general distribution report -- with the object of affecting local change -- that assistance be designed to meet his specific needs.

There is good evidence to suggest that unless a practitioner can be led to formulate his own goals and programmatic change, that he will not be committed to any change which may ensue. This is supported by NDP experience, in which attempts to overly direct or control the nature of client change met with either resentment or resignation; in neither case was change likely to be accepted or institutionalized.

The Project was most successful when it encouraged local articulation of problem areas -- in which case local support made any ensuing change more meaningful.

-- Planning-Oriented Assistance. The object of Tactical Dissemination should be to move the client toward planning for change. Clients who express an interest in developing or redesigning programs should be provided general planning assistance in formulating, implementing, and evaluating change.

The most useful, and at the same time, non-threatening support provided by the NDP was planning-oriented. The task

of change is a difficult one, particularly since disruption of current practices places everyone in an unstable situation. A well-formulated planning process serves to neutralize client "instability," strengthen initiative, and produce sounder program or policy outcomes. Information on specific program models or innovative concerns may be well received, but seldom leads to change. (see NDP report: "State Planning for the Disadvantaged.")

In those colleges visited and those systems reviewed by the NDP, lack of adequate planning was often associated with minimal student achievement,a high level of student dissatisfaction, and a neglect of the needs of various community groups. This was true irregardless of how much money was spent by the college or system. In the current atmosphere of tightening budgets,planning is an imperative. Just as important as the question of <u>what</u> should be done, is the question of <u>how</u> we shall decide.

Examples of the wide variety of planning assistance provided by the NDP are: helping to assess and plan a Community Services Division at Los Angeles City College, developing goals and methods for the disadvantaged with the Rocky Mountain Community College Consortium, providing information on planning instructional assessments for college accreditation at Grossmont Community College, and providing advice on the planning of subject-centered institutes at Mesa College.

-- <u>Multi-Modular Assistance</u>. Tactical Dissemination is

based upon the supposition (tested by the NDP) that a program which combines various "modes" or types of dissemination will be most directly related to client needs. Four modes were identified by the NDP, spanning a "spectrum" of dissemination activities, from the more "passive" modes of dissemination *(Convey and Translate)*, to more "active" modes of dissemination *(Assist and Collaborate)*. These modes are depicted in a chart on the following page.

As the most passive activity of the NDP, reports were prepared dealing with major community college problem areas, and the reports were made available upon request. Respondents who expressed further interest, or more specific interest, were provided supplementary information in letters, over the telephone, or in specially-prepared reports. Those who actually began to formulate program changes, either independently or partially as a result of communication with the Project, were provided planning assistance through further communication and in some cases through on-site assistance.

This multi-modular approach insures that the most active planning assistance is provided only if and when the "client level" shifts from a general concern or an exploration of options, to a commitment to act in establishing priorities or redesigning programs. However, no matter what the client level, a Tactical Dissemination Unit should be able to serve client needs. In so doing, it should also serve to move the client to a higher level.

In practice, a Tactical Dissemination program may be

PASSIVE ← DISSEMINATION SPECTRUM → ACTIVE

CONVEY	TRANSLATE	ASSIST IN PLANNING	COLLABORATE
Provide prepared written materials to client on basis of request. No personalized analysis or interpretation.	Provide materials to client on basis of request. Deal with specific client problems and concerns through letters and telephone communication. To help interpret and translate. Aimed at moving client toward formulation of plans.	Provide planning advice and assistance in local application of information, including goal formulation, program development, implementation, and evaluation.	Co-sponsor and support development of new program models, or of demonstration programs. Not for use except in isolated instances.

F I G U R E V

organized as a unit in a larger agency, such as ERIC. When this is the case, the unit need not be solely responsible for designing and carrying out a range of modular activities. Passive dissemination reports may be developed through the parent clearinghouse agency, or be based on clearinghouse materials. Clients may also be referred to parent-agency personnel.

However, no matter what its structure, the Tactical Dissemination Unit needs to be in charge of organizing and integrating all modes of assistance into a client-specific "dissemination strategy".

ORGANIZING A TACTICAL DISSEMINATION UNIT

The organization and staffing of a Tactical Dissemination Unit may well be an essential factor in its success or failure. The critical operating parameters mentioned above require a good deal of flexibility. Staff members must be able to provide assistance to practitioners through a variety of modes -- from printed reports to on-site visits. They need to have a solid background in planning, as well as a general understanding of community college developments. In suggesting assistance to a client, they need to be able to draw on a wide array of information resources and personal references.

A quick review of NDP structure suggests several lessons useful in organizing a Tactical Planning Unit.

Structure of the National Dissemination Project: The NDP was established in 1972, as an essentially autonomous dissemination unit. Although it was officially associated with the Washington State Board for Community College Education, that agency did not intervene in Project policies or activities. OEO likewise exercised little control of Project activities and provided no tie-ins with other Federal dissemination programs.

Staffing: Phase I. As an autonomous dissemination unit, the NDP was required to undertake a rather long exploratory phase before it could begin active dissemination. Information and experiences needed to be retrieved, analysed and stored. Staff members had to become familiar with all important community college developments, as well as possible client needs.

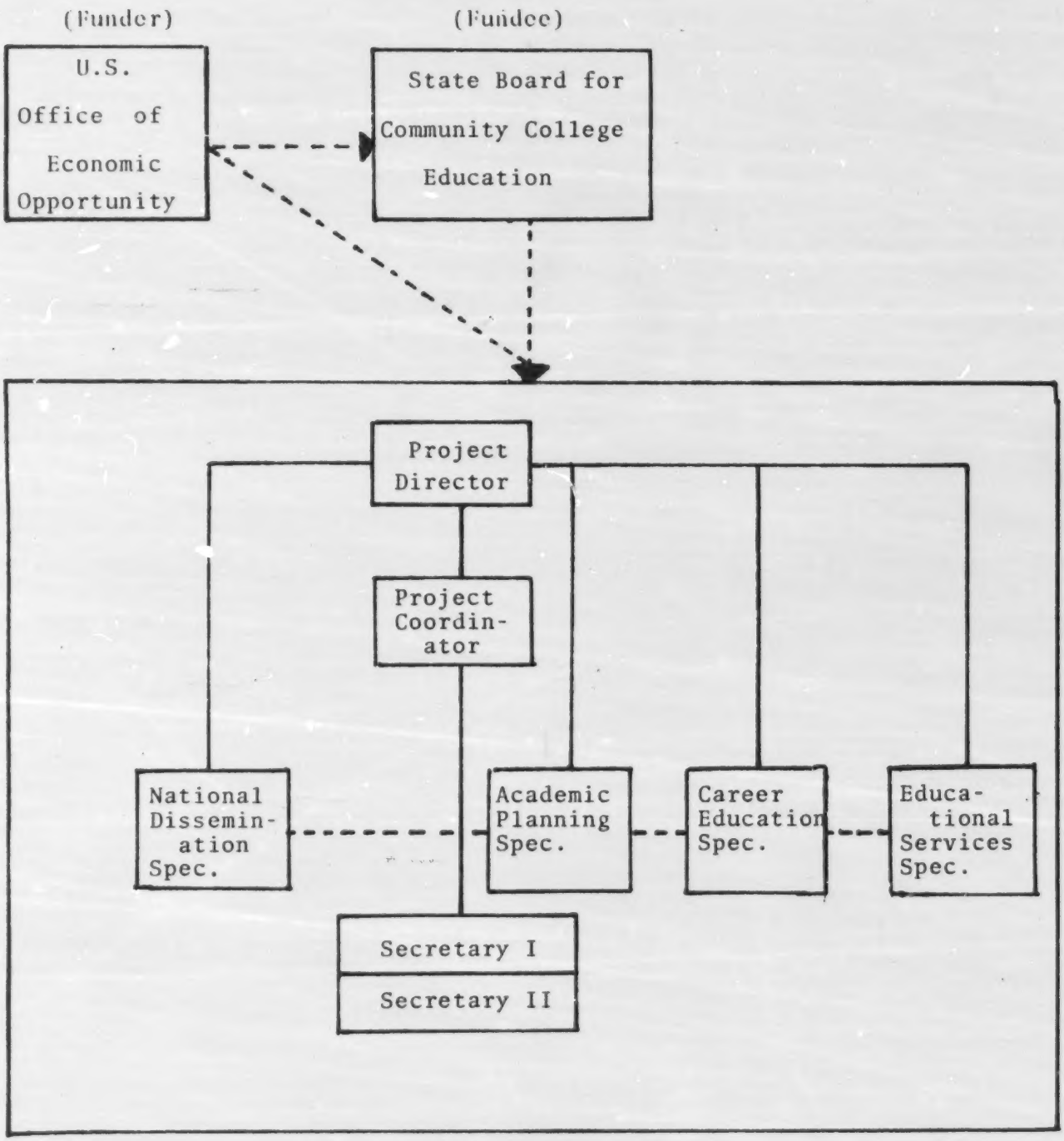
To undertake these functions, an eight-person staff was assembled. It consisted of : (1) a Project Director, to supervise all activities; (2) a Coordinator, to organize budgetary affairs, and insure that the Project was being managed properly; (3) a National Dissemination Specialist, to prepare a strategy for dissemination, and oversee the sequential steps leading up to that strategy; (4) three Area Specialists -- in Academic Planning, Career Education and Educational Services -- to collect and interpret information in their respective fields, and to prepare Project reports for client distribution; and (5) two secretaries to type letters and reports and to manage the filing system. (see Figure VI, p. 49).

Staffing: Phases II and II-B. By the time Phase II had begun in April, 1973 the need for subject area specialists had declined. They had been most critical in the retrieval and assessment of national information, and in the preparation of reports for general distribution. A few quite specific, subject-centered information requests continued to be received, and area specialists were useful in

Figure VI: PHASE I STAFFING:

THE NATIONAL DISSEMINATION PROJECT

(Function: to retrieve, analyse, prepare information; to identify possible strategies and clients)



providing this information. All of these activities, however, were largely passive in nature.

More and more, clients began to request assistance -- more active in nature -- which failed to relate directly to any of the three specialist areas -- or it related to all of them. For these active requests, clients sought more general planning information. To the extent that these practitioners were interested in innovative programs and models, it was only as a background for formulating their own plans.

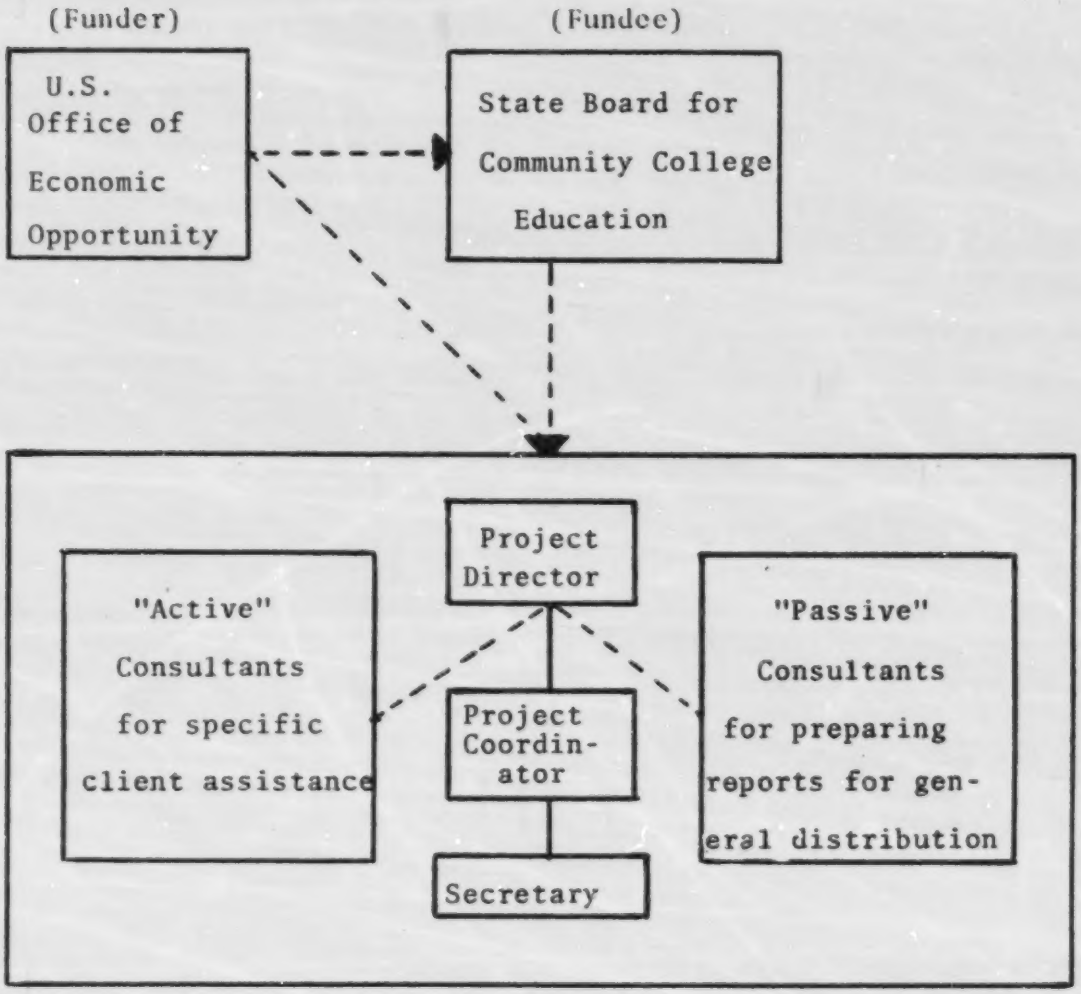
Therefore, staffing for Phase II and II-B of the Project was adjusted to better reflect a planning generalist orientation. Area specialist positions were dropped, and the Project Director assumed the most active role in working with clients. His efforts were augmented during part of this period by the efforts of the National Dissemination Specialist, who monitored passive dissemination activities and helped organize active strategies. In the few instances in which particular subject-area expertise was needed to carry out client assistance, consultants were employed. Consultants were also utilized to prepare reports on topics which had been identified as useful in a client poll. (see Figure VII, p. 51).

Conclusions. The NDP both benefited and suffered because of its autonomous position. Autonomy meant that the Project had to go through a particularly long exploratory period of retrieval, analysis, and client identification. If the NDP had been closely associated with an existing

Figure VII: PHASE II & II-B STAFFING:

THE NATIONAL DISSEMINATION STRATEGY

(Function: to disseminate findings, and assist clients in planning local applications)



dissemination agency, this would not have been such a problem. And as the Project continued, simple requests for informative reports and data could have been referred to the parent dissemination agency.

But autonomy also meant that the NDP was fairly free to develop a flexible approach to working with clients, without restrictions placed on it by a parent agency. It also meant that the Project began without many pre-conceived notions as to what kinds of information were useful, and for whom.

It may be advantageous, therefore, to develop a Tactical Planning Unit as a sub-division in a larger dissemination agency, if the unit can guard against overreliance upon that agency, for identification of "relevant information" or for provision of client assistance.

With regard to staffing, subject-area specialists proved most valuable during the early "passive" phase of information retrieval, assessment, and distribution. Subject-area specialists, therefore, appear to be most closely identified with passive dissemination.

Planning generalists proved most useful in providing active assistance, which tended to require formulation of goals, programming steps, or evaluation. In the few cases where subject-area consultants were employed in active dissemination -- such as in a Vermont workshop on self-directed learning, and an Alaskan conference on Native Americans in the community colleges -- they experienced difficulty in relating their specialized knowledge to the local situation.

Structure of a Tactical Dissemination Unit: If, as suggested, a Tactical Dissemination Unit can be incorporated as a subdivision of a larger dissemination division -- such as ERIC or the Regional Education Laboratories administered by NIE, or the Division of Information Technology and Dissemination at the Office of Education -- much could be gained. The parent agency would be involving itself in personal, multi-dimensional, change supportive dissemination at a minimal expense. Those relatively few, but significant, practitioners who had approached the agency seeking personalized help, and had gone away disappointed, could now be served.

And NDP experience suggests that even if Tactical Dissemination is provided as a free service to clients, the agency will not be swamped with requests for planning assistance it cannot cope with. Active planning assistance is provided only when local practitioners can take the initiative in formulating program ideas, and then only if the institution can demonstrate that it needs and will utilize outside assistance. These restrictions limit dissemination activities and maximize the return on investment.

Expenses could be further reduced by avoiding reliance on "big name" consultants for planning assistance. As already noted, these high-cost consultants often demonstrate an inability to relate their specialized expertise to local planning needs. Most "active" dissemination could be successfully organized and carried out by three-to-four

planning generalists. When special-area expertise is required, above and beyond the abilities of the staff, one of two alternatives is suggested: (1) clients requiring this highly special and/or technical assistance should be referred elsewhere, or (2) in some cases, trusted area-specialists who are not "big names" and who have shown an ability to relate to local practitioners may be pulled in to "assist" the planning generalists.

The Tactical Dissemination Unit should coordinate its activities with those of the parent dissemination agency as much as possible. Personal and information resources may be supplied by the agency, and reports for distribution developed in cooperation with the agency. In some cases, agency reports may already be available relevant for direct use by the Tactical Dissemination Unit.

OPERATING A TACTICAL DISSEMINATION UNIT: NATIONAL DISSEMINATION PROJECT EXPERIENCES

The National Dissemination Project provided a unique opportunity to test out a Tactical Dissemination Model over a two-year period. What follows is a summary of what the NDP learned in the course of its operations. Not everything can be included here because of space limitations, but the attempt has been made to provide an overview of those lessons which seemed to be most significant.

Identifying a Client Group

During the initial pre-dissemination phase of the Project, there was a good deal of uncertainty as to who could best be served by a Tactical Dissemination approach. It was finally decided to prepare a brochure -- describing the Project, listing reports available, and suggesting that we be contacted for further assistance -- and send it to a wide range of potential clients. These included: presidents of two-year institutions, state community college directors, community and junior college professional organizations, and interstate higher education agencies (Federal and non-Federal). A "self-selection" process would then take over, with the Project prepared to work with any and all clients who might respond.

The results were that two-year institutions, and higher education agencies were the only groups which responded in significant numbers to the brochure. Even these responses were almost uniformly requests for reports and not for active assistance. (see Figure VIII p. 59). A strategy needed to be developed that would reach non-responding groups and that would elicit more active requests for assistance.

-- Reaching Non-responding Groups: In an attempt to reach those potential clients who had not responded to the brochure, several follow up letters were sent, encouraging them to contact us for reports or for personal assistance. In addition, telephone calls were made to 24 randomly selected state directors of community college systems. (see Figure IX, p. 59). Both attempts elicited little in the way of new client interest. In the latter case, many state directors were out or in meetings when we called. Promises to return calls were generally not kept. It was concluded that *state directors are often insulated from outside attempts at contact or persuasion or to innovative educational ideas, due to their busy schedules of system management.* Personal contact was later re-established at a national state directors meeting, but beyond presentations few dissemination activities were developed.

The Project continued its efforts to reach new clients throughout its two years of operation -- both formally and informally. As new reports were prepared, form letters were sent out describing them and making them available free

upon request. But again, requests rarely were concerned with more active planning assistance.

-- Eliciting More Active Requests for Assistance: The potential of providing client-specific planning assistance to clients would never be realized unless someone asked for help. Response to the brochure made it clear that this was not an automatic process. What was needed was time and extended communication. *Active assistance began to evolve slowly, often on the basis of a letter or telephone call from a client expressing only a very "fuzzy" and ill-defined interest in change. It was essential that these "fuzzy" expressions of interest be taken seriously, and that through extended and patient communication, avenues of assistance be explored.*

Also over time, the NDP began to build up a series of contacts with agencies and consortia such as: AACJC, NIE, OE, SREB, WICHE, and the Mountain States Consortium. These contacts were often initiated at conferences, workshops, and conventions, and extended over a long period. Working papers were developed for these agencies, and presentations made at meetings.

The benefits of extended time and communication in eliciting active dissemination are several: they allow trust to be built up by the client, and they provide the opportunity for ideas and events to crystallize around a specific course of action.

For example, at Dawson Community College, Montana, the

NDP was originally contacted to explore an ill-defined interest in learning contracts and individualized instruction. When the College committed itself to developing an individualized summer quarter of instruction, we were available to help in specifying goals, objectives and tasks. Communication by phone and letter continued, and Project advice was sought by several new investigative committees on the campus.

By the summer of 1974, the NDP had been able to provide "very active" client-specific assistance to as many as 22 colleges, consortia, and agencies -- all based on extended contact over some period of time. (see Figure X, p. 59).

Client Characteristics

Project experiences suggest that a great deal of personal and institutional vulnerability is involved in requesting outside assistance to plan for change. Client security must be high.

The institution or agency must be willing to admit that it needs or could make use of assistance. It runs the risk of inviting criticism if an outsider participates in formulating ideas or planning programs. This vulnerability factor may effectively prevent many potential clients from requesting anything beyond passive dissemination reports. In most cases, the Project was able to reassure clients who were interested in assistance, and move them toward specific activities. But what of the colleges and agencies who did

FIGURE VIII: Responses by Client Group to Initial Brochure Contact.

Client Groups	Number of Brochures sent	Requests for Reports or Assistance	Response Rate
Community College Presidents	870	154	18%
State Directors	48		
Comm/Junior College Orgn.	39		
Interstate Higher Ed. Agencies	16	3	19%

FIGURE IX: Types of Response to 24 Telephone Calls to State Directors.

Type of Response	Number of Responses
1. Request for Printed Reports	2
2. Expression of Interest	4
3. Request for Assistance	
4. Request for Brochure	5

FIGURE X: Number of Clients in Different Client Groups Provided Extended "Active" Planning Assistance.

Client Group	Number of "Active" Clients
1. Individual Colleges	6
2. Consortia	5
3. State and Interstate Agencies	11

not even express interest? In most cases, it can be assumed that they lacked the personal or institutional security to even explore possible avenues of assistance.

A good example of the vulnerability factor was found in the response to several Project form letters sent out in the fall and winter of 1973-74. In November, 1973, a form letter was sent to community colleges, requesting that they identify topics which they would like to see reports prepared on. Of the approximately 170 letters which were mailed, a positive response was received from 125 or 74 percent. *Accepting prepared reports does not involve institutional or agency vulnerability, and the response rate was consequently high.*

In January, 1974, a follow-up series of form letters was sent to approximately 50 clients who had expressed an interest in special topic reports which had not been prepared, because there was not enough general interest. These letters suggested that the NDP might provide active assistance relating to the special topics, and that we should be contacted for help. Only several clients responded, and none requested on-site assistance. This suggests that *accepting "active" planning assistance involves vulnerability, and consequently only the most secure practitioners and institutions are likely to respond.*

Providing Client Assistance

Passive Dissemination: Because there was a very real attempt made to coordinate and build upon all dissemination

activities in the NDP, dissemination reports for mass distribution were not seen as ends in themselves. They were designed to address topics of practical and important concern, to be easily read and utilized (hence the need to limit length and avoid too much technical jargon), and to "trigger" concern for local applicability which might result in specific planning assistance. All reports contained a foreword which described the Project and suggested that we might be able to provide further assistance.

The first "round" of seven reports were most general in nature. They explored the most important concerns for community college development as identified by the NDP. Later rounds became more specific, and were prepared based upon expression of interest. One such way of identifying client interests was to "poll" education practitioners and officials on what they felt was most important. It was found that it was far easier to elicit possible report topics when a list of non-constraining suggestions was provided. The client examined the list, commented on it, and in a number of cases expanded the list.

Active Dissemination: It was hoped that passive dissemination would serve to "trigger" client interest in more active dissemination assistance. This in fact occurred with regard to specific colleges. But as already mentioned, additional letters, telephone calls, and meetings were often needed to interest higher education agencies and consortia.

No matter how client interest was aroused, an exploratory

phase of extended communication (see p. 44), usually preceded dissemination activities. During this time, the client would "feel out" Project capabilities as well as his own needs. Finally, a specific-work session might be organized although this specific activity was rarely the culmination of cooperative efforts. (see Figure XI, pp. 65-7)

In most cases, active dissemination could not be described as occurring at one workshop or meeting. Rather, it was the summation of a long process of exchanging ideas and formulating directions.

Early Project attempts at active dissemination sometimes failed to recognize this. An example is a workshop on "self-directed learning" organized through the Community College of Vermont in June, 1973. Conceptualized and organized largely by the NDP, the workshop was "presented" to an audience in Vermont, which was unprepared and unmotivated to utilize information. Only when it was decided to scrap most of the formal proceedings and deal with local concerns did participants respond. The workshop had been viewed as an act of dissemination, and inadequate attention had been paid to a process of continuing dialogue.

The Content of Active Dissemination

While active dissemination was always client-specific and therefore varied considerably in each instance, several generalizations may be made as to the content of dissemination which proved most useful.

Assistance was sought in formulating goals and objectives for development, based on an assessment of needs. Individual institutions and community college consortia wanted to explore developmental "thrusts" for disadvantaged students, and to establish goals for meeting their needs. Federal and other interstate agencies were concerned with funding priorities for research and development, and needed goals to guide prioritization.

Useful goals are never self-evident, simple entities. They need to be explicitly stated, translated into achievable objectives, and weighted or prioritized according to their relative importance. Goals need to be seen as commitments to planned change. In this critical area, Project assistance proved most valuable.

Individual institutions, particularly, needed assistance in reorganizing departments or divisions, and in implementing change. Not only did they need someone to review and appraise their plans, they needed help in mobilizing campus support, involving the community, and laying out a step-by-step planning process leading toward implementation.

Finally, assistance was sought in program evaluation, and in making maximum use of the results of evaluation. Consortia and individual institutions needed non-technical evaluation tools that identified major areas in which progress should be expected, adequately appraised achievements, and involved all relevant parties. There are a number of satisfactory techniques for program evaluation. The NDP

acted to insure that clients were aware of the posibilities, and that they saw evaluation as an explicit process, resulting in improvement of the educational process.

In all cases, the following important concerns were stressed in working with clients, in an attempt to make the planning process as meaningful as possible.

1. Planning should always be tied to implementation. Specific developments should be expected as a result of planning. The commitment to act upon goals and objectives is essential.

2. The threat of change should be reduced as much as possible, by insuring that all planning decisions are well understood. Uncertainty and fear of unanticipated consequences are formidable barriers to change.

3. Planning should avoid being a "zero-sum game", where in order for one group to get what it wants, another group must lose.

4. Planning should involve as many relevant agencies and groups as possible. This helps insure commitment to the final plan.

5. When possible, planning should make use of analogies between situations being dealt with and situations in other locations.

FIGURE XI: NATIONAL DISSEMINATION PROJECT:

EXTENDED "ACTIVE" ASSISTANCE

	INSTITUTION or AGENCY	PRINCIPAL CONTACTS	ASSISTANCE TOPIC
1.	Southeast California Community College Council	College President	AA/BA Articulation
2.	Grossmont Community College	College President	Planning Instructional Assessments
3.	Post-Secondary Education Commission, Montana	Committee Chairman	Manpower and Management Committee
4.	Los Angeles City College	College Division Coordinator	Community Services
5.	Rocky Mountain Community College Consortium	Consortium Coordinator	Disadvantaged Education Goals
6.	California Dept. of Education	Director of Research Division	Occupational Forecasting
7.	Colorado State Board for Community Colleges	Director of Research Division	Occupational Forecasting
8.	Mesa College, Colorado	Staff Assistant, College President	Identifying Community Needs
9.	Community College of Vermont	Staff Assistant	Student-Directed Learning
10.	Community College Division, Florida	Coordinator for Disadvantaged Programs	Penal Reform

	INSTITUTION or AGENCY	PRINCIPAL CONTACTS	ASSISTANCE TOPIC
11.	Puget Sound Regional Minority Affairs Consortium	College Minority Affairs Directors	General Planning & Cost-Benefit Systems
12.	Washington State Board for Community Colleges	State Board Planner	Disadvantaged "Thrust" Planning
13.	Council of State Directors of Community College Systems (Consortium)	State Directors	General Concerns
14.	Community College Division of Alaska, Tribal Council HEW Region 10	College Presidents Tribal Chiefs Agency Representatives	Statewide Demonstration Planning
15.	Seattle Central Community College	Staff Assistants	Institutional Renewal Program
16.	NIE	Staff Assistants	Funding, Research Program Needs
17.	OE	Staff Assistants	Funding, Research Program Needs
18.	Fund for Improvement of Post-Secondary Education	Staff Assistants	Funding, Research Program Needs
19.	National Interest Group: La Raza	College Presidents Deans, Staff Assistants	Programming/Planning Ideas
20.	National Interest Group: Black American Affairs Council (AACJC)	College Presidents Deans, Staff Assistants	Programming/Planning Ideas

	INSTITUTION or AGENCY	PRINCIPAL CONTACTS	ASSISTANCE TOPIC
21.	Conference of Statewide Vocational-Education Directors (Consortium)	State Vocational-Education Directors	Career Education Planning
22.	Dawson College, Montana	College President Staff Assistant	Individualized Instruction, Accountability Systems

TACTICAL DISSEMINATION:
CASE STUDIES AND CONCLUSIONS

In this final section, Tactical Dissemination is shown in operation through two brief case studies. In both cases, the National Dissemination Project provided client-centered, planning-oriented, multi-modular assistance to clients and met with considerable success in supporting meaningful change.

As a result of Project activities, clients expressed an increased understanding of the need for planned change, achievement of specific changes, and heightened confidence in their capacities to develop successful programs. Following the case studies, conclusions are suggested.

DAWSON COLLEGE AND THE MONTANA POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION COMMISSION

Dawson is a small, rural community college of some 250 students located in Glendive, Montana. Under the aggressive leadership of President James Hoffman -- a man who considers himself an educational developer as well as an administrator -- the college had begun experimenting with learning contracts and individualized instruction during 1973. But lacking was a clear understanding by the college staff of just how far it should go in the direction of experimentation, how it should proceed, and how it should evaluate results.

It was with this background that Hoffman attended a regularly scheduled meeting of the Mountain States Community College Consortium held in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, in early August, 1973. Also attending was the director of the National Dissemination Project, Deb Das, who gave an address on needed community college developments and participated in informal discussions. Soon thereafter, Hoffman approached the Project through letter to assist in planning a teacher-orientation session for the fall to deal with individualized, competency-based learning.

What followed was a series of 22 letters between Hoffman and the NDP, as well as numerous telephone conversations

to clarify the implications of written communication.

The most immediate concern was for the fall workshop for teachers, which Deb Das helped organize and lead. When workshop participants decided to explore the possibility of having an individualized summer quarter in 1974, questions of faculty coordination, lead time, and planning steps had to be addressed. Out of the workshop came a commitment to plan the individualized summer quarter and evaluate its success or failure.

While at the workshop, Hoffman suggested that the experience of the NDP might be valuable in helping the recently established Montana Post-Secondary Education Commission better address community college needs. Hoffman, himself, was a member of two committees in the Commission -- Manpower Planning and Accountability -- and it was suggested that the Project make input through him into these committees.

Between December, 1973,and May, 1974, materials relevant to Manpower Planning and Accountability were discussed and committee drafts analysed and revised. Goals, objectives, and tasks were differentiated; and several matrices were products which suggested college accountability to various community groups.

The end result was a set of Commission recommendations which incorporated a number of NDP inputs. In the Accountability Committee they included: an agreement that accountability cannot be defined without the participation of all

community and college groups; and use of a matrix approach for depicting college accountability. In the Manpower Planning Committee they included: a major recommendation that the state invest in development of a long-range employment forecasting system; and acceptance of the principle that without state development of a forecasting system "in a form that is usable by the community college educator", it is difficult to expect community colleges to adequately plan.

In its entirety, contact with Dawson College and the Montana Post-Secondary Education Commission represented a model example of active dissemination at its best. Local initiative was high, and Project assistance tailored to meet specific local needs -- as they developed.

LOS ANGELES CITY COLLEGE

Passive dissemination with LACC had begun early. Claude Ware, an associate dean at the College, had requested Project reports and participated in a poll of client interests. In the spring of 1974, Ron Dyste, an associate of Ware's who had been appointed deputy coordinator for community services, happened to see some NDP material and thought it interesting.

Dyste was in charge of planning a coordinated community services delivery system for the fall term and was looking for help in overall planning and program evaluation, so he called upon the NDP. Through telephone conversations with Project Director Deb Das, it was decided that an informal

meeting with Community Services staff members might serve to better define possible Project assistance and a meeting was subsequently scheduled for April 22.

A good deal was accomplished at this first exploratory meeting, due to the sophistication and awareness of the staff. Representatives of the New Directions Program, Cooperative Education, Senior Citizens Program, and other community service components explored the following important areas: a definition of community services; overall planning systems for coordinating the various community service components; articulation with the State Civil Service Commission regarding job classifications and salary scales; and the general problem of institutionalizing community services. It was decided that a second workshop would be useful during the summer, after participants had the chance to experiment with some of the techniques explored in the first workshop.

During the interim period the staff did considerable work with relevance matrices, goal generation techniques, and evaluation models suggested by the NDP. It was then possible, on the return visit, to go over planning tools and methodologies in some detail, and in a more formal way. By staff agreement, it was decided to concentrate on a discussion of evaluative tools -- how to choose them, and how to select evaluative criteria. A heuristic approach to community services evaluation was the outcome.

To demonstrate evaluation models, the New Directions Program was selected as an example. Goals and objectives

were analyzed to set the framework for evaluation, and elements of the program evaluated for effectiveness. Out of this, it became evident that a program should be planned from the outset with evaluation in mind.

Project activities at LACC, one of the largest community colleges in the country, demonstrate the effectiveness of building client awareness and expertise over several work sessions. The result was an increased understanding of the need to properly plan and evaluate, as well as achievement of specific program change.

CONCLUSIONS

The National Dissemination Project has based its activities on the supposition that dissemination is one stage in the process of planned change. The entire process includes: conceptualization, formulation, implementation, evaluation, dissemination, and utilization of knowledge. Together these stages form a change support cycle, which can be a powerful influence in the improvement of American education. But when any single element is missing, or inadequately served, (such as dissemination) the cycle is broken and change short-circuited. The necessity of having an aggressive client-centered dissemination strategy, employing a variety of modes and techniques, should be obvious.

The other major supposition of the NDP was that dissemination which is planning-oriented would be most directly related to change. Preoccupation with changing needs, expectations, and roles is certainly not new in American education. But, if change is a major preoccupation, properly planned and executed change is a major need. What is called for now, as much as a description of problems and a call for new solutions, is an exploration of the planning process as it relates to these needs.

The educational community needs, and a dissemination program must be prepared to offer, general planning and policy-making support. As the system exists today it seems clear that it cannot effectively respond to the pressing demands being made upon it by an increasingly concerned constituency. The citizenry will no longer accept on faith the notion that its educational institutions and agencies are properly serving it. Congress also has recognized the need for planning, and is pushing states toward establishment of coordinated planning commissions for higher education under provisions of the Education Amendments of 1972.

Much of what is being done by Federal dissemination agencies today does not directly address these planning concerns, aimed at local utilization of knowledge. The clearinghouse approach,as has been shown, speaks to research needs. Information is rarely relevant to local needs, is untranslatable for use by practitioners, and is difficult to retrieve.

As for the marketing techniques employed by the Office of Education and the Regional Education Laboratories in attempts to "sell" the results of Research and Development projects, several criticisms seem relevant: (1) The models which are marketed rarely match local needs and situations, and are rarely made adaptable; (2) a great deal of more relevant information is not made available to the client

because of emphasis on a single model; and (3) attempts to "sell" specific models often breed distrust by local practitioners.

It should be remembered that the goal of dissemination is the improvement of education, and it is in terms of this goal that any dissemination program can be judged. A dissemination program which does not lead to improvements in the processes of education -- no matter how large its budget, how impressive its organization, or how much material it disseminates -- must be looked upon as less than successful.

Tactical Dissemination, seen in these terms, may well produce more change benefits at a lower cost per unit of dissemination than do established dissemination agencies. As a component of a larger dissemination agency it could provide a breadth and a depth of assistance heretofore unrealized.

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